



Volunteer Newsletter

Southern Arizona VA Health Care System • Tucson, AZ •

August 2010

Director's Comments

American Anthropologist Margaret Mead once said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it is the only thing that ever has."

SAVAHCS Volunteers have indeed changed the world for our Veterans and for all of us here at our hospital. Your warmth and compassion compliment the modern, high-tech environment of VA medicine. You provide a valuable link to the community, and perhaps most importantly, your presence assures hospitalized Veterans that their sacrifices have not been forgotten. Never underestimate the impact that your volunteer work has upon Veterans. What may seem "small" to you is rarely viewed as a small thing in the eyes of the Veterans that you serve.

We recently passed an Inspector General (IG) and Combined Assessment Practice (CAP) hospital surveys. Thank you to the volunteers for your efforts in keeping up-to-date with your annual trainings which helped SAVAHCS achieve extremely successful results from these inspections. Volunteers are what help make this hospital a great one.

To our volunteers, I offer my humble gratitude for the great acts that you achieve, and the positive impact that you make on Veterans' lives each and every day that you give of your time and your talents. Thank you again for all that you do for our Veterans.



Jonathan H. Gardner, MPA, FACHE
Director
Southern Arizona VA Health Care System



VAVS Program Manager, Deborah Brookshire, accepting a check from the Veteran Patient Programs (VPP) Golf Tournament Committee co-chair Vincent Baiocchetti. This year's tournament was held on June 6th at the Del Lago Golf Club. The tournament raised \$11,500 for SAVAHCS patient programs. The organization has

donated over \$50,000 since 2005 in support of our Veteran patients.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Sept. 8 (5:00 p.m.-6:30 p.m.) Evening Volunteer Orientation, Auditorium *
- Sept. 17 (10:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m.) POW/MIA Recognition Ceremony, Auditorium
- Sept. 28 (10:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m.) Volunteer Orientation, Auditorium *
- Sept. 29 (1:00 p.m.-2:00 p.m.) VAVS Executive Board Meeting, Conference Room 1A
- Oct. 8 (10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.) SAVAHCS Diversity Day, Auditorium
- Oct. 12 (1:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m.) VAVS Committee Meeting, Auditorium
- Oct. 13 (1:00 p.m.-2:30 p.m.) Volunteer Orientation, Auditorium *
- Oct. 16 (11:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.) OEF/OIF Welcome Home, University of Arizona Mall
- Oct. 27 (9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.) Red Cross Blood Drive, Auditorium
- Oct. 27-29 (9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.) Volunteer Concierge training, Conf. Rm. A*
- Oct. 30 (10:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m.) Volunteer Orientation, Auditorium *
- Nov. 6 (10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.) Gathering of American Indian Veterans (GAIV), AVA Ampitheater
- Nov. 10 (9:00 a.m.) VAVS Veteran's Day Float Decorating, Parking Lot M
- Nov. 11 (9:00 a.m.) Tucson Veteran's Day Parade-City of Tucson Float Riders meet at Bldg. 1A
- Nov. 11 (2:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m.) Veteran's Day Concert, SAVAHCS Fountain Courtyard
- Nov. 16 (10:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m.) Volunteer Orientation, Auditorium *
- Nov. 17 (11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.) Volunteer Thanksgiving Luncheon, Auditorium
- Nov. 26 & 29 (9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.) Holiday Tree Decoration, Auditorium
- Dec. 1 (9:00 a.m.) American Legion Auxiliary Gift Shop Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony, Auditorium
- Dec. 1-3 (9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.) American Legion Auxiliary Gift Shop, Auditorium
- Dec. 15 (10:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m.) Volunteer Orientation, Auditorium *
- Dec. 17 (7:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.) Holiday Patient Party-Sponsored by B.P.O. Elks, Auditorium
- Dec. 19 (11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.) Holiday Patient Party-Sponsored by VFW & VFW Aux, Auditorium
- Dec. 24 (10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.) Hospital Patient Holiday Gift Distribution, Auditorium*

*Reservation or registration required. Please contact Voluntary Service Office, 629-1822.

Summer Youth Volunteer Program

The SAVAHCS Summer Youth Volunteer Program officially began on June 11th with an orientation attended by high school and college-aged students. A total of 58 youth between the ages of 14 - 20 are volunteering in



a variety of areas throughout the hospital, including the Pathology Lab, Nursing Service, Patient Transport, Physical Therapy, Blind Rehabilitation, Canteen Service, Mental Health, Recreation Therapy, and Medical Media. The SAVAHCS staff has been very supportive in welcoming and mentoring

these energetic and eager volunteers. The experience that the students receive as volunteers is invaluable as they learn the importance of the VA's mission and opportunities in the health care field.

In recognition of the youths' efforts, a pizza party was sponsored by several VAVS organizations and was held on July 14th in the auditorium. These organizations include American Legion and Auxiliary; Paralyzed Veterans Association; Veterans of Foreign Wars and Auxiliary; Jewish War Veterans; Military Order of the Purple Heart Ladies Auxiliary; Forty & Eight; National Society of the Colonial Dames, Ex-POW's; Twenty & Four, Gold Star Wives; Daughters of the American Revolution and the Military Order of the Cootie Auxiliary. The organizations made a \$35 donation for each student they sponsored to support the youth in their volunteer efforts, and provided volunteer t-shirts and funding for the recognition party. The organization in-return receives credit for the hours that the youth have volunteered. Thank you all for the support you give to the youth volunteer program!

Welcome New VAVS Program Support Assistant

We'd like to introduce Diane Gnuschke, who accepted the position of Voluntary Service Program Support Assistant in June. Diane provides the much-needed "front-line" support in the VAVS office. Diane retired from the Air Force in 1997 after 22 years maintaining fighter aircraft. She

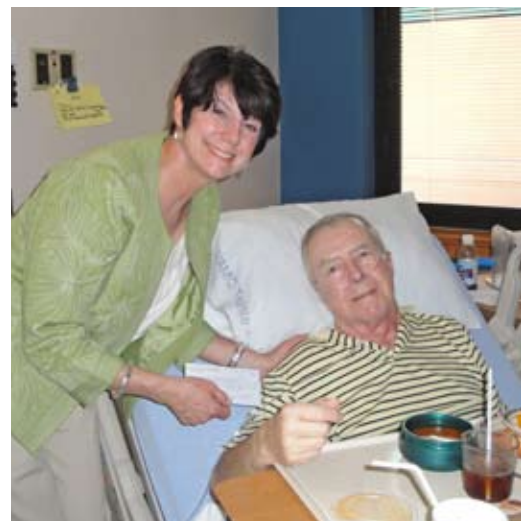


has volunteered at SAVAHCS in various capacities and drives as a volunteer for the Southwestern Blind Rehabilitation Center (SWBRC) on the weekends. Diane and her husband David organize the Elks BBQ on the fourth Saturday of the month held in the Community Living Center (CLC). She is originally from Maine and grew up on a dairy

farm. Diane is excited to join the staff and meet our volunteers. Please stop by to introduce yourself and welcome Diane!

Memorial Day Program

SAVAHCS hosted a Memorial Day program on Sunday, May 30th in the R.E. Lindsey Auditorium to honor those who paid the ultimate price in service to our nation. All in attendance were privileged to hear from guest speaker, Retired Air Force Colonel Kent Laughbaum, who spoke of the military service and sacrifices of generations past and present. The Disabled American Veterans Color Guard presented the colors, with DeLois Pierson, SAVAHCS Decedent Affairs Program Assistant, opening with the National Anthem. The ceremony closed with VFW member Scotty Welch's bugle performance of "Taps". Over 20 Airmen from Davis-Monthan Air Force Base visited with, and escorted several of the hospitalized Veterans in attendance. After the ceremony, the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Gold Star Wives of America provided refreshments in the Patio Conference Room.



Long-time Veteran supporter and golf tournament committee fundraiser Nils Nilson with Deborah Brookshire. Nils passed away on July 9, 2010, and will be remembered as a selfless volunteer who served his fellow Veterans.

SAVAHCS Volunteers Always Cowboy Up!



Volunteer Openings: You Are Our Best Recruiters!

Patient Concierge - Provide friendly and helpful assistance to Veterans and guests in inpatient and outpatient areas. Project polished appearance, confident demeanor, and commitment to excellence, and a customer-first attitude. Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

DAV Drivers - Mon-Friday. Drive van and pick up Veterans at their homes to transport them to and from their appointments at SAVAHC main campus. Drivers needed from Tucson, Sierra Vista, Yuma & Casa Grande areas.

Licensed Barbers/Hairdressers - Assist Homeless Program staff in the Homeless Program by providing haircuts for Homeless Veterans. Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-12:00 p.m., 12:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.



The Voluntary Service Office has moved from Building 4 to Building 58, previously occupied by the Veterans Service Office. The new building provides more office space for the VAVS Staff and a larger waiting room for visitors.



American Veterans (AMVETS) Auxiliary presenting a donation check for SAVAHC patient programs to Deborah Brookshire, Voluntary Service Program Manager.



The national touring group "ReCreation" visited the Veteran patients in the SAVAHC Auditorium on April 7, 2010. The group sang a medley of uplifting and patriotic tunes to bring smiles to Veterans and staff in attendance.

CONGRATULATIONS SAVAHCS VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR- 2009



2009 Male Volunteer of the Year- Robert DiVarco

Robert "Bob" DiVarco has volunteered at SAVAHCS for over 18 years, donating over 7500 hours in service to his fellow Veterans. Bob has volunteered in a number of ways during his tenure with the hospital, and currently splits his time between the Patient Education Resource Center (PERC), Building 80 Information Desk and Escort 80. In the PERC, Bob assists Veterans with registering on MyHealtheVet and offers constructive feedback on how to improve the registration process. He is a good person to brainstorm and bounce ideas off of. He never lacks an opinion! Being a Veteran himself and knowing the VA system, Bob has guided many Veterans through the problem-solving process with referrals to the Veteran Service Officers. Bob is a wonderful trainer and a natural leader, faithfully volunteering before the sun rises until nightfall. He also serves as a Chaplain and Color Guard member with his local Veterans of Foreign Wars Post, assisting with

quarterly memorial services in the Community Living Center (CLC), and barbecues for the Veterans in the Southwest Blind Rehabilitation Center (SWBRC).



2009 Woman Volunteer of the Year- Judy Cowgill

Judy Cowgill has volunteered over 500 hours in the past two years at SAVAHCS. She works two days a week with the Veterans and families in the Hospice unit. The most impressive thing that Judy does as a volunteer is being with Veterans who are alone and afraid at the time they are dying. She will sit at their bedside for hours, holding their hand and making sure their needs are met at the end of life. Judy is invaluable to the Hospice staff as she actively supports the families of dying patients by listening and having a shoulder to cry on. Judy alerts the staff to any additional care the patient might need and acts as a liaison and advocate between patients, families and staff.



2009 Youth Volunteer of the Year- Michelle Ruch

Michelle Ruch started volunteering at SAVAHCS in 2007 and has served over 350 hours. She has volunteered in a variety of administrative and patient-centered assignments. With her positive attitude and willingness to learn, Michelle was able to fill many last-minute volunteer requests and has been personally requested by several departments. Michelle has assisted with several special projects, improving timeliness and patient satisfaction, including making clinic appointment reminder calls to Veterans' homes, providing one-on-one online computer trainings in the Southwest Blind Rehabilitation Center (SWBRC), transporting Veterans throughout the hospital to their medical appointments,

checking-in donors at the Red Cross Blood Drives, front reception coverage in Human Resources and the Executive Office, decorating the hospital for the holiday season, mass mailing projects, and assisting with ground breaking and building dedications. No matter the task, Michelle has been eager to serve.

Voluntary Service Newsletter Editorial Board

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The VAVS newsletter has been created for all volunteers and potential volunteers of the Southern Arizona VA Health Care System. This publication is meant to showcase the wonderful work all of our volunteers contribute to the VA.

We Want to Hear from You!

If you have any comments, questions, story ideas, etc., please contact:

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